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231 Shillong is excellent, the flavour being quite as good as that
263 of English honey. Under "Miscellaneous Customs connected with Death" will be found a reference to the statement that the
[764] dead bodies of Siems used to be embalmed in honey. The existence of the custom is generally denied by Khasis, but its former prevalence is probable, as several trustworthy authors have quoted it.

HOUSES.

342 The houses of the people are cleaner than might be supposed
515 after taking into consideration the dirtiness of the clothes and persons of those who inhabit them. They are as a rule substantial thatched cottages with plank or stone walls, and raised on a plinth some 2 to 3 ft. from the ground. The only
354 window is a small opening on one side of the house, which admits but a dim light into the smoke-begrimed interior. The beams are so low that it is impossible for a person of ordinary stature to stand erect within. The fire is always burning on an earthen or stone hearth in the centre. There is no chimney, the smoke finding its exit as best it can. The firewood is placed to dry on a swinging frame above the hearth. In the
343 porch are stacked fuel and odds and ends. The pigs and calves
342 are generally kept in little houses just outside the main building. The Khasi house is oval-shaped, and is divided into three rooms, a porch, a centre room, and a retiring-room.

354 In olden days the Khasis considered nails *sang*, or taboo, and
784 only used a certain kind of timber for the fender which surrounds the hearth; but they are not so particular now-a-days.
342 In Mawkhar, Cherrapunji, and other large villages, the walls of houses are generally of stone. In Cherrapunji the houses are frequently large, but the largest house I have seen in the hills is that of the Doloi of Suhtnga in the Jaintia Hills, which measures 74 ft. in length. The house of the Siem Priestess at Smit in the Khasi Hills is another large one, being 61 ft. long by 30 ft. broad. In front of the Khasi house is a little space fenced in on two sides, but open towards the village street. The

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241 when fire is applied, logs of wood being placed at intervals of a few feet to prevent as far as possible the ashes being blown away by the wind. The lands are not hoed, nor treated any further, paddy and millet being sown broadcast, and the seeds of root crops, as well as of maize and Job's tears, being dibbled into the ground by means of small hoes. No manure, beyond the wood ashes above mentioned, is used on this class of land; there is no irrigation, and no other system of watering is resorted to. The seeds are sown generally when the first rain falls. This style of cultivation, or *jhum*, is largely resorted to by the people inhabiting the eastern and southern portions of the Jaintia Hills, e.g. the Bhois and Lalungs, the Lynngams and
243 Garos of the western tracts of the district. Wet paddy land
312 (*hali* or *pynthor*) is, as the name implies, the land where the kind of paddy which requires a great deal of water is grown. The bottoms of valleys are divided up into little compartments by means of fairly high banks corresponding to the Assamese *ális*, and the water is let in at will into these compartments by means of skilfully contrived irrigation channels, sometimes a
243 mile or more in length. The soil is made into a thick paste in the Jaintia Hills by means of the plough, and in the Khasi Hills through the agency of the hoe. Droves of cattle also are driven repeatedly over the paddy-fields until the mud has acquired the right consistency. The seed is then sown broadcast in the wet mud. It is not sown first in a seedling bed and then transplanted, as in Assam and Bengal. When the plants have grown to a height of about four inches, water is let in again; then comes the weeding, which has to be done several
243 times. When the crop is ripe, the ears are cut with a sickle
784 (*ka rashi*) generally, so as to leave almost the entire stalk, and are left in different parts of the field. A peculiarity about the Lynngam and the Khasis and Mikirs of the low hills, or Bhois as they are called, is that they reckon it *sang*, or taboo, to use the sickle. They reap their grain by pulling the ear through the hand. The sheaves, after they are dry, are collected and
243 thrashed out on the spot, either by beating them against a stone (*shoh kba*), or by men and women treading them out (*iuh kba*). Cattle are not used for treading out the grain. The

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000 credited, owing, no doubt, to the advance of Christianity and education.

CEREMONIES AND CUSTOMS ATTENDING BIRTH AND NAMING OF CHILDREN.

844 The Khasi birth ceremonies and customs are as follows:—
[784] When a child is born the umbilical cord is cut by a sharp
782 splinter of bamboo; no knife can be used on this occasion. The Mundas of Chota Nagpur similarly taboo a metal instrument for this purpose. The child is then bathed in hot water from a red earthen pot. The placenta is carefully preserved in an earthen vessel in the house till after the naming ceremony has taken place. When the umbilical cord, after being tied, falls off, a puja is performed with eggs to certain water deities (*ka blei sam-ma* and *ka niangriang*),* also to a forest spirit
553 (*u'suid bri* or *u'suid khláw*). The naming ceremony of the child
386 is performed the next morning after the birth. Certain females are invited to come and pound rice in a mortar into flour. The flour when ready is placed on a bamboo winnower (*u prah*). Fermented rice is mixed with water and is placed in a gourd. Some powdered turmeric is also provided, and is kept ready in a plantain leaf, also five pieces of *'kha piah*, or dried fish. The earthen pot containing the placenta is then placed in the *nongpei*, or centre room of the house. If the child is a male, they place near him a bow and three arrows (the implements of a Khasi warrior); if a female, a *da* and *u star*, or cane
553 head-strap for carrying burdens. An elderly man, who knows
782 how to perform the naming puja, which is called by the Khasis "*kaba jer khun*," places a plantain-leaf on the floor and sprinkles some water on it. He takes the gourd in his hand and calls a god to witness. The people assembled then mention a number of names for the child, and ask the man who is performing the puja to repeat them. This he does, and at the same time pours a little liquor from the gourd on to the ground. As he goes on pouring, the liquor by degrees becomes exhausted, and finally only a few drops remain. The name at the repeat-

* A spirit which is supposed to have the power of causing a disease of the navel of a child.

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553 when they do this they invariably fall crossed to the ground. "They thus save their eggs, save time and trouble, get the
553 name they desire for the child. . . ." It is noteworthy that
844 the Khasis consider it necessary to preserve the placenta until the ceremony of naming the child is over, and that the pot containing the placenta is waved over the head of the child before it is removed and hung up in a tree.

844 Dr. Fraser, at page 53 *et seq.* of the "Golden Bough," when
171 dealing with the subject of sympathetic magic, refers to the navel string and the placenta as parts which are commonly believed amongst certain people to remain in sympathetic union with the body after the physical connection has been severed, and it is interesting to note that in the Babar Archipelago, between New Guinea and Celebes, the placenta is mixed with ashes and put in a small basket, which seven women, each of them armed with a sword, hang up on a tree of a peculiar kind (*citrus hystrix*). The women carry the swords for the purpose of frightening the evil spirits, otherwise the latter might get hold of the placenta and make the child sick. Mr. C. M. Pleyte, Lecturer on Indonesian Ethnology, at the Gymnasium William III. at Batavia, who has most courteously furnished me with some interesting information on this subject, states that it is especially in the Southern Moluccas that the placenta is mixed with ashes and hung in a tree. Wider spread is the custom of placing the after-birth on a small bamboo raft in a river "in order that it may be caught by crocodiles, incarnations of the ancestors, who will guard it till the person to whom it has belonged dies. Then the soul of the placenta is once more united with that of the dead man, and together they go to the realms of the dead. During lifetime the connection between men and their placentas is never withdrawn." The Khasis, although they cannot explain the meaning of the presence of the placenta at the naming ceremony, and the care with which they remove it and hang it up in a tree, are probably really actuated by the same sentiments as the inhabitants of the Southern Moluccas, i.e. they believe that there is, as Dr. Frazer puts it, a sympathetic union with the body after the physical
846 connection with the child has been severed. There is no fixed
784 period of *sang*, or taboo, after a birth, but the parents of the

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child are prohibited by custom from crossing a stream or washing their clothes until the navel-string falls off, for fear that the child should be attacked by the demons of the hills and the vales.

The Wár birth customs are substantially the same as those of the Khasis, but there is the difference that a Wár family after a birth is *sang*, or taboo, for seven days, whereas amongst the Khasis the only prohibition is that the parents must not cross a stream or wash their clothes until they have propitiated the spirits. A twin birth is *sang*, or taboo. The Khasis argue that as there is but one *Ka Iawbei* (first ancestress), and one *U Thawlang* (first ancestor), so one child, either male or female, should be born at a time. A twin birth is accordingly regarded as a visitation from God for some *sang*, or transgression, committed by some member of the clan. When the twins are of opposite sexes the *sang* is considered to be extremely serious, the Khasi idea being that defilement has taken place within the womb. The case is treated as one of *shong kur*, or marriage within the clan, and the bones of the twins cannot be placed in the sepulchre of the clan.

There are no special birth customs amongst the Lyngams.

There is no trace of the *couvade* amongst the Khasis.

MARRIAGE.

We now come to consider marriage amongst the Khasis from a religious point of view. Shadwell has said that marriage amongst the Khasis "is purely a civil contract." This statement is not correct, for there is an elaborate religious ceremony at which God the creator, *U'lei thaw briew man briew*, the goal or goddess of the State, *U* or *ka'lei Synshar*, and, what is probably more important, the ancestress and ancestor of the clan, *Ka Iawbei-tynnien* and *U Thawlang*, are invoked. There are three marriage ceremonies prevalent amongst the Khasis, which are (*a*) *Pynhiarsynjat*, (*b*) *Lamdoh*, and (*c*) *Iadib-biad*, respectively. The first and second forms above mentioned are considered the more respectable; the last-named is resorted to by the very poor who cannot afford the greater expense entailed by the first two ceremonies.

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GENNA.

The word *genna* is one in common use amongst the Naga tribes. It seems to be a matter of doubt whether the word belongs to any of the numerous languages or dialects spoken by these tribes; but for our purposes it may be taken to mean *taboo*. The Khasi word *sang*, which implies an interdiction either religious or social from doing any particular thing, might have been employed; but as the word *genna* is so commonly used when speaking of taboos amongst the hill tribes of this province, I have thought fit to employ it here. The word *genna*, or taboo, may be held to include the Khasi *sang*. Taboos amongst the Khasis, Wárs and Lyangams may be divided into two sections; (*a*) general, and (*b*) special. Instances of general taboo have not been found amongst the Khasis, but the following taboo called *Ka sang kla* amongst the Wár villages of Sohlar and Nongiri is peculiar, and therefore worthy of description. Its chief peculiarity is that during the time the *sang kla* continues, the inhabitants of these two villages are not allowed to associate with foreigners. This *genna* takes place twice a year, in the months of June and November, and lasts for a month each time. During the *genna* foreigners are not allowed to stay the night in these two villages, and the villagers must not sleep the night outside their villages. If they do not return home for the night, they are subjected to a fine. There is a prohibition against eating, smoking, or chewing betel-nut with foreigners during the period. The above is the only instance of general taboo that I have been able to find amongst the Wárs, but in the Lyangam villages there is a taboo on all outsiders at the time of the village pujas. Such a taboo amongst the Lyangams is not to be wondered at, as they have probably imbibed the notion from their Garo mothers, intermarriages between Lyangams and Garos being common. The Garos, like other Thibeto-Burmans, have numerous taboos. There are numerous instances of special taboos among the Khasis. *Kaba shong song*, or marrying within the *kur* or clan, is the most important taboo of all, and is regarded as the most serious offence a Khasi can commit. It admits of no expiation, and the bones and ashes of the offender cannot

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be placed in the family tomb. There are special taboos for certain clans, of which the following are some examples. The clan Nongtathiang cannot eat the lemon, the Khar-umnuid clan must abstain from pork, the Cherra Siem family cannot eat dried fish, and the Siem family of Mylliem taboo the pumpkin. Possibly these taboos may be relics of totemism amongst these communities. The following are some of the other taboos, although some of them are but lightly regarded now-a-days.

(i.) To build a house with stone walls on all four sides.

(ii.) To use nails in building a house.

(iii.) To use more than one kind of timber in building the hearth.

(iv.) To build a house with resinous timber. Only the Siem family can use such timber.

(v.) To cut trees from a sacred forest.

(vi.) To take or give anything with the left hand.

(vii.) To step over any one's body.

(viii.) To kill any animal or bird without first throwing rice over its body.

(ix.) To drink the milk of a cow or goat.

(x.) To talk with any one, except with one of a man's or woman's fellow-workers, when the thrashing of paddy is going on.

There are the following special taboos for pregnant women.

(a) To accompany a funeral procession.

(b) To finish any sewing she may have commenced before she became *enceinte*. There is a similar prohibition regarding the finishing of the plaiting of wicker baskets.

(c) It is *sang* for the husband of a pregnant woman to thatch the ridge of the house at such a time, or to fix a handle to an axe or a *dao*.

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301 This stone is apparently some rough gem which may be picked up by the Lyngams in the river beds. A rich man amongst
556 them, however, is one who possesses a number of metal gongs,
534 which they call *wiang*. For these they pay very high prices.
436 Rs. 100 being quite a moderate sum for one of them. Being curious to see one of these gongs, I asked a *sirdar*, or head-man, to show me one. He replied that he would do so, but it would take time, as he always buried his
[531] gongs in the jungle for fear of thieves. Next morning he brought me a gong of bell metal, with carvings of animals engraved thereon. The gong when struck gave out a rich deep note like that of Burmese or Thibetan gongs. These gongs have a regular currency in this part of the hills, and represent to the Lyngams "Bank of England" notes. It would be interesting to try to ascertain what is their history, for no one in the Lyngam country makes them in these days. Is it possible that the Garos brought them with them when
534 they migrated from Thibet? The gongs are well known in the
622 Garo Hills, and I hear that when a *nokma*, or head-man, there
778 dies his corpse is laid out upon them. They thus possess also an element of sanctity, besides being valuable for what they will fetch to the Garos or Lyngams. We may hope to hear more about them in Captain Playfair's account of the Garos.

309 The Lyngams do not tattoo. Their weapons are the large-
411 headed Garo spear, the dao, and the shield. They do not usually
243 carry bows and arrows, although there are some who possess them. They are by occupation cultivators. They sow two kinds of hill rice, red and white, on the hill-sides. They have no wet paddy cultivation, and they do not cultivate in terraces like the Nagas. They burn the jungle about February, after cutting down some of the trees and clearing away some of the debris, and then sow the paddy broadcast, without cultivating the ground in any way. They also cultivate millet and Job's-tears in the same way. With the paddy *thillim* are sown the
241 first year. The egg plant, arum, ginger, turmeric, and sweet
231 potatoes of several varieties are grown by them in a similar
●784 manner. Those that rear the lac insect plant *lendoo* trees (Hindi *arhal dal*) in the forest clearings, and rear the insect thereon. Some of these people, however, are prohibited by a

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custom of their own from cultivating the *lendoo*, in which case they plant certain other trees favourable to the growth of the lac insect. The villages are situated near their patches of cultivation in the forest. The villages are constantly shifting, owing to the necessity of burning fresh tracts of forest every two years. The houses are entirely built of bamboo, and, for such temporary structures, are very well built. In front, the houses are raised some 3 or 4 ft. from the ground on platforms, being generally built on the side of a fairly steep hill, one end of the house resting on the ground, and the other on bamboo posts. The back end of the house is sometimes some 8 or 9 ft. from the ground. At the end of the house farthest away from the village path is a platform used for sitting out in the evening, and for spreading rattans and other articles to dry. Some Lyngam houses have only one room in which men, women, and children are all huddled together, the hearth being in the centre, and, underneath the platform, the pigs. Well-to-do people, however, possess a sitting room, where husband and wife sleep. A house I measured at Nongkhlaw village was of the following dimensions:—Length, 42 ft.; breadth, 16 ft.; height of house from the ground to the eaves, front, 9 ft.; back 18 ft. Houses are built with a portion of the thatch hanging over the eaves in front. No explanation could be given me for this. It is probably a Garo custom. In some Lyngam villages there are houses in the centre of the village where the young unmarried men sleep, where male guests are accommodated, and where the village festivities go on. These are similar to the *dekordoorgra* bachelors' clubhouses of the Mikirs, Garos, and Lalungs, and to the *morung* of the Nagas. This is a custom of the Thibeto-Burman tribes in Assam, and is not a Khasi institution. There are also high platforms, some 12 ft. or 15 ft. in height, in Lyngam villages, where the elders sit of an evening in the hot weather and take the air. Lyngam houses and villages are usually much cleaner than the ordinary Khasi villages, and although the Lyngams keep pigs, they do not seem to be so much as evidence as in the Khasi village. There is little or no furniture in a Lyngam house. The Lyngam sleeps on a mat on the floor, and in cold weather covers himself with a

782 The Khasi also erect little platforms with little houses from long bamboo sticks in which food is served to the spirits of the woods and fields (to serve [siang-] actually means spread out, as one spreads out a carpet or as one spread out leaves for serving rice on).

[784] But not only through making sacrifices do the Khasi try to propitiate the devils and thereby make them harmless. They even try it with violence. Thus, as mentioned above, they drive the cholera demoness out of the house with sticks. Also during a cremation they shoot three arrows to ward off evil spirits.

There are many ways of warding off evil spirits; or, for acquiring their help words, wishes, or curses are used, as, for example, during a match of arrow shooting, the watchers who stand by the target try to keep the arrows of the opponents from hitting the target by calling on some god (ksuid) and the more they shriek, the sooner they believe they will attain their purpose. They wish to influence the arrows of the opponents.

3. Taboos (sang)

•784 782 The sang or taboos of the Khasi also belong to superstition. Sang means the same as "sacrilegiously or most strictly forbidden." This sang can be traced back to totemistic views. Sang can be something for a single person, for a house (iing) or a family, for a sib and a whole race (jaid). If a man or a woman whose spouse has [587 921] died remarries, the sang is transferred to the relatives of the deceased man or woman. This "inheritance" of the sang is different according to the sib. By accepting the sang the inheritors must pay 11 of a [kil] kaŝ or 7 1/2 of a kaŝ or 5 1/2 of a kaŝ. By kaŝ the number 1280 is actually understood. But it means, however, that

784 782 the heir must pay 11 or 7 1/2 or 5 1/2 percent of their wealth, in order to be able to pay for the great festivities at the cremation and the later disposal of the ashes. First of all various sacrificial gifts are bought with the money. When one has all the sacrificial gifts together, one erects three hewn stones in the manner of mau-bynna (urn stones) on any road. These stones are called "adulterer stones" /Ehebrechersteine/ (mau-klim). Then one catches a pig and curses it in the following way: (10)

[113]

10. This and the following Khasi texts are taken from the kitab jingphawar by U. Rabon Singh (Shillong, 1902); I am indebted to the very worthy P.C. Bonheim, Apostolic Missionary, S.D.S. of Cherrapunji, who was most willing to place his many years of experience at my disposal for the translation into German.

Hei sngewkyndiang ho kane nga iathuhkhana ba me ba la ioh ka sang na ka tnga ka jong me yn leh kumno kynrad wei la pom ka bneng ka khyndew, ka tyrut ka smer sngew la khuid ka sang ka ma, ka klim ka ngat yn long sa ka rong sa ka taw, sa ka sngewbha ka sngewmiat mo! Hei une sa u dykhot u lamjew ka iad bang ka iad thiang mo!

So listen carefully to this that I am saying, thou who hast inherited the sang from thy wife; What else should we do, lord; after heaven and earth, the Tyrut and the Smer (demonesses) slay him, we are freed; the sang is made holy, the feared sang, adultery and other sins. Then it can be that the bones are transferred and peace and joy will come to us, mo! (is it

784 not so!) See here the piece u dykhot (11) and
782

11. A piece of sacrificial meat.

the sour things u lamjew (12) (a strong and

12. Herbs, roots.

sweet liquor) no! (is it not so!)

[574] All relatives and acquaintances, friends and neighbors are invited to this sacrificial feast.[1] There is a big festive meal, chiefly of meat and bacon. But before the eating begins, the reng (horn) and ngap (fork) which were laid on the "adulterer stone" before the cursing of the pig are removed. At this sacrifice all the money collected before (11 or 7 1/2 or 5 1/2 of a kâw) must be completely used up, as it is forbidden to preserve any of it in house so that it will not get mixed up with the daily wage or one's earnings.

[587] The remarriage must naturally occur in another sib (jaid) if the sang is to be inherited; because otherwise the sang would remain in the family.

784 Most of the sang that occur, different according to the families or the sibs, are the following: (13)

13. Gurdon, The Khasis, p. 5.

[618] 1. Building a house with stone walls on all four sides.
2. The use of iron nails in building a house.
3. The use of more than one kind of wood in building a hearth.
4. The use of resinous wood in building a house.
5. Felling wood in a holy forest (except

1 [cf. cat. nb pp. 19-21 -- Analyst]

• 784

for a cremation). See table I, picture 2, "The heathen Khasi village Raliang with a "holy wood" (law kyntang) in the background."

6. Giving or taking anything at all with the left hand.
7. Stepping over the corpse of another person.
8. Killing an animal or bird without having previously strewn rice on its head.
9. Using the milk of the cow or the goat.
10. Completing all kinds of started sewing or basket weaving for pregnant women.
11. Pregnant women are not allowed to accompany any funeral procession.
12. The husband of a pregnant woman is forbidden to roof the house (straw roof) or to make a handle for a hatchet or an axe (ka wait - ka da).
13. Speaking with anyone at all as long as the threshing of the rice lasts, unless it is with the co-workers of the man or of the woman.
14. Variously the use of pork, dried fish, melons, lemons, etc. is forbidden.

784 Violating the sang is punished by the
68 deity. Thus several Khasi explained after the
342 great earthquake of June 12, 1897: "Because you built your houses of stone and fastened the planks with nails, it has so happened that everything has tumbled down, because god does not wish stone and despises nails. Formerly we too built only with wood and bamboo and used bast for making things fast and for binding, but today people have become proud and have built with stone. That is why this has happened; god

784
682
342 hates stone; he does not wish any lime." (14)

14. P.A. Münzloher, S.D.S. Die apostolische Präfektur Assam /The Apostolic Prefecture of Assam/ (Rome, 1899), p. 83.

4. Egg Throwing (shat-pylleng)

787 The most common of all the oracles of the
782 Khasi is egg throwing (shat-pylleng). A great deal has already been written about it. (15)

[113] 15. P. Dr. C. Becker, Das Eierwerfen der Khasi /Egg Throwing Among the Khasi/ Anthropos XII-XIII (1917-1918), pp. 494-496.

I will only add here the prayer of the sacrificer u nongshat-pylleng. It is not an actual prayer, at least the nongshat-pylleng is not bound to any formula. The sacrificer speaks approximately thus:

Ko lengsam khun ka blei, ko banang ko batip ko ba lah ko baiai, nga pynthiah nga pyndem halor ka diengshat ka diengkhein, ka duwan ka dupat, a kynrad ngan kylli ngan	O thou egg of the oracle, thou daughter of the goddess, thou whom thou knowest and art aware of (art able to) thou remainest thou (stayest); I put thee down here on the board (16)

16. Cf. Table II, Picture 1. /419/

togkit katne ba long shitom ka lanot ka shoh ka ther ka shit ka syang ka pisa ka lynga ia ka met u	on the oracular wood, on the altar, o mistress, I question and ponder (would like to question,

his wife and children. ooo

2. Holy Pieces of Land and Forest

A special kind of land property is still encountered in the Khasi and Jaintia Mountains. These are pieces of land and forests which are considered sang or kyntang, forbidden or holy, thus kyndêu sang, khlau kyntang, forbidden fields, holy forests. They are also named in connection with the name god, for example, khlau Blei, forest of the gods, which, to a certain extent, might offer the key to their purpose and meaning. The hands of man are not supposed to disturb this kind of property; this property is sacred to the gods and at the most may be used in their service. 423 778

It is not easy to trace the origin and beginnings of these reserves. But several solutions may be found in regard to sections of land. When the /136/ Catholic mission station was founded in the village of Schella which is located on a steep mountain slope, it was hard to find a place that was halfway suitable and big enough to build even a small dwelling on it. Finally the missionary discovered such a place somewhat outside the village. But then there was a new difficulty. The place was the cremation area for the dead and therefore was sang /taboo/. The spirits of the dead would punish every intruder severely. The people were finally persuaded to burn their dead somewhere else, but it was more difficult to find any who were ready to help with the work of the building. Even those whom the missionary finally persuaded to help still suffered heavily from the fear of the punishment of the gods and continuously one or the other of them had imaginary illnesses. [777] [764] [784]

In the cases of more extensive pieces of land, the snake worshippers (thlen), who carry on their dreadful activities in the Khasi Mountains, (8) may offer an explanation sometimes. If such a person is 423 784 [776] [782]

8. Im Stromtal des Brahmaputra, /In the River Valley of the Brahmaputra/, pp. 76ff.

convicted of murder, which he has committed in the service of the snake god in order to sacrifice the blood of the slain person to him, and if he wishes to free himself from the conviction, he can do nothing other than sell all his movable and immovable property. The latter thus becomes sang. Nobody would dare to take over the fields and gardens, to plant anything there, or to touch any fruit on that property. Thus in Cherrapunji a native Catholic was able to take

423 possession of a couple of orange gardens which a thlen worshipper
784 had abandoned, as the former did not believe in ghosts. (9)

9. Ibid., p. 82.

423 In the case of all these pieces of ground which are considered
784 sang, the fear of the severe punishment of the gods prevents each
797 owner from building. If another builds, he does not stop him, because he leaves him to the revenge of the insulted god. As may be seen from the case mentioned, the /137/ heathen are at a disadvantage in respect to their compatriots who have turned to Christianity. The latter no longer feel tied to the heathen laws, at least as far as religion is involved and no longer share their fears in many things. Impoverished Khasi Christians thus find an opportunity to acquire land in cases when it would not be possible for a Khasi who is still held captive by animistic beliefs.

But among the latter there are also disgraceful exceptions. In Nongbah, a larger village of the Jaintia Mountains with perhaps 400 huts -- therefore the name, which means large village -- several years ago a heathen observed with a jealous eye how so many pieces of the fallow fields of the gods were changed into fertile lands under the hands of the Christians. The wish grew in him to do likewise. Although he no longer had much fear of his gods, he still had to reckon with the anger and revenge of the members of his clan, if he as a heathen dared to take such a step. They were not likely to dare to do anything against Christians. Without further ado he became converted to the Methodist religion and appeared before the English government official in Jowai, the capital of the Jaintia Mountains, for the transfer of a suitable piece of land. After the revolt of the Synteng in the year 1862, the English government pronounced the whole territory of the Jaintia Mountains to be government land. They also claim the right of bestowal of all free-lying land, usually by a lease of many years. Since the government receives rent for the land, it is in its interest when applicants appear. In this case the deed of conveyance was issued and over the years a flourishing rice field was made from the land that had been useless up to now. Now that the renter was sure of his affairs, he turned his back on the Methodists in order to become a heathen again and to participate in the heathen sacrifices. But then he got into trouble. The heathen were incensed at such a game and brought serious charges before the English government official. He ruled that in the future no piece of ground of that type /138/ should be leased except upon

presentation of the written statement of the chieftain and the village elders that they would have no objection to it. The avaricious renter of the divine land mentioned above was despised by all.

As concerns the holy forests, which often extend picturesquely from the highest peak down the slope and are overgrown with gnarled oaks and bright colored rhododendron, no tree may be felled there; at the most, fallen wood or wood torn down by a storm or already rotten wood may be taken. The spirits of the forest, as punishing gods, will revenge every offense. Tigers and leopards, apes, bears, and snakes enjoy an undisturbed existence here. The only case in which wood may be cut in these divine woods is for the religious cremation ceremonies of the dead. It is the custom of the Khasi to set fire often to great areas in order to fertilize the ground with the ashes of grasses, trees, and shrubs without regard for the new growth of trees, and to make potato fields there for a year or two or to grow mountain rice, millet, or something similar and then to leave the field fallow again. Thus this is a clever precautionary rule, since there might otherwise be cases when there might be no wood for cremating the dead.

(Continuation follows)

/300/ Family Property and Maternal Rights
by C. Becker S.D.S., Würzburg

Gurdon says, (10) that these holy groves were formerly the property

10. The Khasis, p. 87.

of a village. That is not always so as the following case will demonstrate. I am also relating this because it grants us a deeper look into the whole customs of the clan under discussion.

Several decades ago, a Khasi who had become a Protestant, U Jacob Shai by name, was installed as a clerk with the English government official in Jowai. In order to assure his family a better living than just his meager salary, he yearned for land. By birth from Jongushen in the War territory, he remembered that he could obtain his aim in the neighboring village Syndai from the family clan Umliang. So one day he went thither. After the customary greetings, and refreshment with a water pipe and betel nut and conversation about various indifferent matters, he mentioned his desire. "I know," he said in the polite language of even these simple natural men, "I know the goodness and the good name of your clan /Stamm/ and the elders

8: Gurdon G-3 (no date) 1904 AR7 Khasi AR7

764 As mentioned before, these stones are not gravestones, they are
769 shaped, both the vertical and the horizontal stones, remarkably like
211 the pictures of *menhirs* and *dolmens* that appear in Fergussons's work on rude stone monuments. It is a remarkable fact that Dalton mentions the existence of apparently very similar memorial stones in certain *Ho* and *Munda* villages in Chota Nagpur, and there is a drawing to be found at page 52 of Yule's Embassy to the Court of Ava of a cromlech which is apparently very like the cromlechs or *mawkynthei* to be met with every day in these hills. It is most unfortunate that the
[212] Khasis, owing to their want of a written language in former days, posses no written accounts of these stones, and that the Khasis of the present day are so very vague in their ideas about them, for I am inclined to believe that the proper elucidation of this question of memorial stones may prove to be the key to the origin of these people. I therefore strongly advise that a very careful search be made for similar stones, such as I have described, in other parts of India. It is possible that the Khasis may have found monoliths erected by some prehistoric race when they arrived in the Khasi Hills, and they may have adopted the custom of erecting memorial stones by the force of example, but the use of such stones seems to fit in with the Khasi system of ancestor worship, and it is remarkable that the shapes of the stones should be so very similar to those which exist in England, Ireland and Brittany, and I believe also in Denmark and Scandinavia. Is the custom of erecting such memorial stones in any way connected with people practising the matriarchate? The whole subject is a deeply interesting one, and I hope that it may be possible to throw some light on it.

784 13. *Taboo.*—The Khasis have an elaborate system of *sang*, or taboo. There are very many different kinds of *sang*, but some of them are the following :—

Special taboo, at time of pregnancy.—(*a*) It is *sang* for a pregnant woman to accompany a funeral procession.

(*b*) It is *sang* for a woman in the first stage of pregnancy to finish any sewing which she may have commenced before she became *enceinte*. There is a similar prohibition regarding the finishing of the plaiting of wicker baskets.

(*c*) It is *sang* for the husband of a pregnant woman to thatch the ridge of the roof of a house at such a time.

(*d*) It is *sang* under similar circumstances to fix an axe or a *dao* in a handle.

Ordinary taboos.—(*i*) It is *sang* to build a house with stone walls on all four sides.

(ii) It is *sang* to use nails in fixing the timber of a house.

(iii) The *dypei*, or hearth, should be made of one kind of timber only.

(iv) To build a house with resinous timber (*'seh khlein*). Only the Siem's family can use such timber.

(v) To cut trees from the sacred forest.

(vi) To take or give anything with the left hand.

(vii) To step over the body of any person.

(viii) To kill a fowl or a goat without throwing first rice over the body of the victim.

(ix) To drink the milk of a cow or goat.

(x) To talk with any one, except with those who are working together, when the thrashing of paddy is going on.

(xi) Not to give fire or water when anyone demands the same.

(xii) A twin birth is *sang*. It is a more serious matter even than *sang* if the twins are of opposite sexes.

There are rules of *sang* regarding marriages within prohibited degrees of relationship, and there is a very stringent rule of *sang* against marrying within the *kur*, or clan. Those who do this are excommunicated and their bones or ashes are not allowed to be placed in the family mausoleum. To marry within the same *kur*, or clan, is the greatest crime a Khasi can commit.

There are special rules of *sang* affecting certain families, *e.g.*, for the clan *Nongtathiang* to eat a certain kind of lemon, for the clan *Kharumnuid* to eat pork, for the Cherra Siem's family to eat dry fish, for the family of the Siem of Mylliem to eat the pumpkin. Possibly, these taboos may be relics of totemism in these families.

14. *The Thlen superstition.*—The following succinct account of this interesting superstition appeared on page 254, paragraph 20, of the *Assam Gazette* of the 5th August 1882. I do not think I can do better than repeat it here: "The tradition is that there was once in a cave near Cherrapunji a gigantic snake, or *Thlen*, who committed great havoc among men and animals. At last one man, bolder than his fellows, took with him a herd of goats and set himself down by the cave and offered them one by one to the *Thlen*. By degrees the monster became friendly, and learnt to open his mouth at a word from the man, to receive the lump of flesh which was then thrown in. When confidence was thoroughly established, the man heated a lump of iron red hot in a furnace, induced the snake at the usual signal, to open his mouth, and then threw in the red hot lump, and so killed him. He then cut up the body and sent pieces in every direction, with orders that the people were to eat them. Wherever the order was